

**Argula von Grumbach (1492-1563)**  
**Letter of Protest to the Faculty of the University of Ingolstadt, 1523**

To the honorable, worthy, highborn, erudite, noble, stalwart Rector and all the Faculty of the University of Ingolstadt: When I heard what you had done to Arcasius Seehofer under terror of imprisonment and the stake, my heart trembled and my bones quaked. What have Luther and Melanchthon taught save the Word of God? You have condemned them. You have not refuted them. Where do you read in the Bible that Christ, the apostles, and the prophets imprisoned, banished, burned or murdered anyone? You tell us we must obey the magistrates. Correct. But neither the pope, nor the Kaiser, nor the princes have any authority over the Word of God. You need not think you can pull God, the prophets and the apostles out of heaven with papal decretals drawn from Aristotle, who was not a Christian at all. I am not unacquainted with the word of Paul that women should be silent in church [1 Tim. 1:2] but, when no man will or can speak, I am driven by the word of the Lord when he said, "He who confesses me on earth, him will I confess and he who denies me, him will I deny" [Matt 10, Luke 9], and I take comfort in the words of the prophet Isaiah [3:12], "I will send you children to be your princes and women to be your rulers." You seek to destroy all of Luther's works. In that case you will have to destroy the New Testament, which he has translated. IN the German writings of Luther and Melanchthon I have found nothing heretical, and there a goodly number of Luther's works of which Spalatin has sent me a list. Even if Luther should recant, what he has said would still be the Word of God. I would be willing to come and dispute with you in German and you won't need to use Luther's translation of the Bible. You can use the one written 31 years ago [the Koburger of 1483]. You have the key of knowledge and you close the kingdom of heaven. But you are defeating yourselves. The news of what has been done to this lad of 18 has reached us and other cities in so short a time that soon it will be known to all the world. The Lord will forgive Arcasius, as he forgave Peter, who denied his master, though not threatened by prison and fire. Great good will yet come from this young man. I send you not a woman's ranting, but the Word of God. I write as a member of the Church of Christ against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, as they will against the Church of Rome. God give us his grace that we may all be blessed. Amen.

Arcasius Seehofer,

- age 18
- had studied at the University of Wittenberg under Philip Melanchthon (Luther was hidden at Wartburg Castle)
- became an instructor at the University of Ingolstadt
- introduced Luther/Melanchthon position on justification by grace through faith
- his living quarters were searched, a number of books by Luther and Melanchthon were found
- he was imprisoned, threatened with burning at the stake, and induced to make a public recantation, incarcerated in an isolated cloister
- no official response to Argula's letter

Unofficial Response:

Frau Argula is your name,  
And what's more ornery, without shame  
You forgot that you're a maid  
And are so fresh you're not afraid  
To assume the role of doctor  
And teach new faith to prince and proctor.  
By your stupidity inflated  
Ingolstadt is castigated.  
(signed a "free student at Ingolstadt")

Argula's response:

In answer in the name of God  
To shut the mouth of this bold snob.  
Reproaches me with lack of shame  
When he is scared to give his name.  
A "free student" at Ingolstadt,  
I will not give him tit for tat.  
If, as he boasts, he is so free  
Why not give his name to me?  
He tells me to mind my knitting.  
To obey my man indeed is fitting,  
But if he drives me from God's Word  
In Matthew ten it is declared  
Home and child we must forsake  
When God's honor is at stake.

Another Letter:

Behold how the Turk rages. No wonder, when the pope follows the counsel of the devil in forbidding marriage to priests and monks, as if the gift of chastity were conferred by putting on a cowl, and the pope then collects taxes on bastards! No wonder, when a priest receives annually 800 florin and never preaches once a year! The Franciscans, vowed to poverty, devour widows' house. Priests, monks, and nuns are robbers. God says so. I say so. And even if Luther says so, it still is so. Have regard, gracious princes, to the flock of the Lord Jesus Christ, purchased not with silver and gold but with his rose red blood. Dated on the Saturday before the elevation of the Holy Cross, 1523.

Humbly,  
Argula von Grumbach  
Born a Stauffer.

The prince's copy in Munich as written below her signature:

"Born a Lutheran whore and gate of hell  
13 December 1523.

## Luther's commendation of Argula

"The Duke of Bavaria rages above measure, killing, crushing and persecuting the gospel with all his might. That most noble woman, Argula von Stauffer, is there making a valiant fight with great spirit, boldness of speech and knowledge of Christ. She deserves that all pray for Christ's victory in her. She has attacked the University of Ingolstadt for forcing the recantation of a certain youth, Arcasius Seehofer. Her husband, who treats her tyrannically, has been deposed from this prefecture. What he will do you can imagine. She alone, among these monsters, carries on with firm faith, though, she admits, not without inner trembling. She is a singular instrument of Christ. I commend her to you, that Christ through this infirm vessel may confound the mighty and those who glory in their strength."

Argula was highly controversial and shunned by her family but she also had admirers for her writings. She was praised by a Lutheran preacher [Balthasar Hubmaier](#) in nearby [Regensburg](#), who wrote that she "knows more of the divine Word than all of the red hats (canon lawyers and cardinals) ever saw or could conceive of" and compared her to heroic women in the Bible.

In 1524 Argula wrote to Luther urging him to seal his testimony by marrying. His response: that he was not of a mind to marry "not because I am sexless log or stone, but because I expect daily the death of a heretic."